



TOWN OF STONINGTON
Department of Police Services

J. DARREN STEWART, *Chief of Police*

Testimony of Chief Darren Stewart 02/21/2013 re: Bill #6373

Good morning/afternoon and thank you to the Public Safety and Security committee for the opportunity to speak in favor of Governor's Bill #6373. I am Chief Darren Stewart and I have the honor of being the Chief of Police for the Town of Stonington, but also the President of the Law Enforcement Council of Eastern Connecticut. I have been a police officer in this State for almost 30 years and the Chief in Stonington for 5 years. The LEC represents 24 Police Departments in Eastern Connecticut and provides State mandated recertification training for all sworn officers of these departments. In addition, the LEC provides specialty training for command and supervisory personnel and also a very popular active shooter program. Because the LEC represents such a wide variety of Police Departments, we are able to be the clearing house for policy and procedure questions, hiring processes, promotional processes, equipment purchases, and regional law enforcement incentives. Both Casino Police department are members of the LEC and have been so for many years.

With LEC providing the bulk of the State required training (which is 60 hours of training every 3 years to maintain State certification), both Casino Police Departments participate in these trainings and send all their personnel to at least the 40 hour training we provide. This is the same training the Officers from the other 22 Police Departments in the region receive. Training includes Domestic Violence update, hate and bias crimes, Constitutional Law updates, Use of Force Training, identifying and working with emotional disturbed persons, and active shooter to name just some of the topics.

I have had the opportunity to work with the leadership of both Casino Police Departments and especially the Mohegan Tribal Police Department. Two of their command staff, Deputy Chief Jeff Hotsky and Public Safety Director Joe Lavin were actually supervisors of mine many years ago when assigned to the Statewide Narcotics Task Force; furthermore, while a Lieutenant in Stonington, I worked closely with Chief Frank Gavigan when he was the Captain at the Norwich Police Department on policy development. I further have worked with Chief Dittman of the Mashantucket Tribal PD when he was a New London Police Officer. Each of these leaders are quality people and do things right. I am very happy to work with each of them and we are happy they are part of the LEC family.

Since Mohegan Tribal PD's establishment, they have endeavored to hire certified police officers in preparation for this time. All their Officers have been Police Officers from surrounding Police Departments, including some from the State Police (some were even assigned to the casino unit). The Mohegan Tribal PD and Mashantucket Tribal PD's basically patrol small cities. With the Mohegan Sun having a daily average population of approximately 25,000 people (visitors and staff), they are faced with many of the same issues our communities face-domestic violence, disturbances, medical assists, larcenies, and yes serving the public. Their law enforcement staff is trained to the same standards as police officers in this State and region which is a testament to their desire to be professional and meet the standards of law enforcement in this State.

Both PD's have been active members of the LEC and have become part of our region. Many of our citizens work at these sites and many of our citizens visit them on a regular basis. Local Police department have forged excellent working relationships with both PD's for the betterment of law enforcement and to solve crime throughout eastern Connecticut which is a very good thing. We know who to contact and now have worked and trained with these officers which goes to stability and continuity of service. I have visited both PD's on many occasions and have been impressed with the progress they have made in readiness for today. In

a recent visit to Mohegan Sun, I was again impressed with the number of Officers on-duty and visible throughout the facility. I was also informed of their staffing levels and deployment options during busy times and special events and was again surprised at the number of Officers and deployments they have done in the name of public safety. Needless to say in these times of Homeland Security issues, they seem ready to respond and have a very active presence. Each PD has a dispatch center and holding facility like any other PD in the State and actually each has very impressive public safety complexes.

The bottom line is that each of these PD's has worked towards this date. Granted Mohegan Tribal PD is further along in the process and Mashantucket is very actively moving forward. They are part of our region and now part of our law enforcement family. Each PD has worked tirelessly to train and reach a level of professionalism equal to police departments throughout this State. With that, if there are any questions I would be happy to answer.